Council on Technology Services
State & Local Application and Network Integration Workgroup

Tuesday, May 18, 1999 -- 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM
Virginia Department of Information Technology Executive Conference Room
Richmond Plaza Building
110 South Seventh Street
Richmond, Virginia

Members in attendance:
David J. Molchany, Fairfax County
David C. Sullivan, City of Virginia Beach

Guests in attendance:
Peggy Van Lowe, Fairfax County
Ann-Marie Kinzler, Metamor Worldwide for Fairfax County
Jeff Street, Virginia Department of Health
Dennis Gardner, Prince William County
Ruth A. Benker, Fairfax County
Sandy Wiseman, Fairfax County
David Nims, Virginia Century Date Change Initiative Project Office
Howard Weiner, Virginia Department of Social Services
Leslie R. Carter, Virginia Department of Information Technology
Patricia Borinski, Virginia Department of Information Technology

Application Integration

Howard Weiner of the Virginia Department of Social Services made a presentation covering the main applications used by localities in working with the Department of Social Services. These applications include OASIS, ADAPT, and APECS. Howard also briefed the group on the Department of Social Services data warehousing/data sharing effort. The presentation began with an overview of OASIS, ADAPT and APECS and a statement from Howard that these applications were designed, from the ground up, to be Y2K compliant, a number of other smaller mission critical applications are scheduled to be compliant by September 1, 1999. David Sullivan reported that Virginia Beach had tested approximately three hundred machines provided by the Virginia Department of Social Services (DSS) to Virginia Beach and found that all were Y2K compliant. Howard mentioned that DSS was fortunate in that the majority of their inventory was relatively new and therefore did not require a large investment in upgrades.

The next section of the presentation focused on partnerships. Howard detailed for the group the vast complexity of partners that DSS is involved with in providing systems. These include a myriad of

Federal funding streams and requirements and over one hundred and thirty localities which must use these systems. The presentation was designed to help localities understand the difficulty in developing totally integrated systems to meet everyone's needs from the Federal government to the state government to the localities. To address the concerns of localities the Virginia Department of Social Services is developing two methods by which localities will be able to interface with data in the existing systems. The first relies on the technology of object request brokers (ORB) and application interface replication objects (AIRO). These tools will provide object views of existing systems and allow localities to write interfaces to extract data from these systems and provide data back to these systems. This technology is in a proof of concept scheduled to take place in the August/September 1999 time frame. Many network issues may have to be considered as these objects could increase the need for network bandwidth.

Howard concluded the presentation with a discussion of the data warehousing/data sharing project now underway at DSS. He stressed their experience in data warehousing has been similar to experiences across the industry. As with all data warehousing projects, there is a balance between understanding what questions may be asked and the amount of information that can be kept in the data warehouse. DSS has approached this by using a method called "query by known parts." They have built a matrix of data elements and tables from which queries are generally based. The data warehouse information is then published in the form of these tables which will be able to be queried or downloaded by localities by localities or other agencies using the DSS data. The first of these tables is to be ready by the second or third week of June, 1999. Howard believes that this will provide localities with access to much of the information that they have been feeding into state systems for years and have not been able to analyze or make program decisions upon. Howard stressed that he was the contact if anyone was interested in exploring the use of these tables.

Our next presenter was Dave Nims of the Century Date Change Initiative Project Office (CDCI) who came to provide a report on the Y2K compliance efforts with VISION and other Health Department systems. Dave began by giving us an overview of the CDCI tracking and monitoring system on the web and encouraged us to check the status of agency projects through that application. As of May 15th the data on the web is current for the April 1999 reporting period. Dave also mentioned that Virginia was misreported by stateline.org as being at a 33% completion rate with its Y2K effort. The state is really at a 94% completion rate and this misinterpretation was the result of not comparing Virginia's approach of using Primary Business Activities instead of systems in reporting Y2K compliance. He reported that CDCI is now taking over all components of the Health Department's Y2K effort. They are at approximately 60% completion of Y2K efforts.

Dave reported overall expectations and schedule for the state's entire CDCI effort. They are looking at July 1 as an overall completion date although some activities are behind schedule. CDCI is calling for contingency plans and is well into the process of certifying efforts by Primary Business Activities. He identified three groupings of Primary Business Activities: Level 1, which will require verification and validation by an independent contractor (CACI). There are a total of fifty-nine Primary Business Activities identified as Level 1. Level 2 Primary Business Activities will have independent verification with CDCI providing training and methodology for those doing the verifications. There are sixty-four

Primary Business Activities categorized as Level 2. Level 3 will require self verification by the agencies and this covers the remaining Primary Business Activities identified. The overall verification and validation process is scheduled to be complete by mid to late summer.

Jeff Street, representing the Virginia Department of Health, provided an overview of the VISION system and the Health Department's interface engine. This summer the Health Department expects to have its one millionth customer in the VISION system. VISION is divided into three phases. Phase One - which went into production in March of this year included client services and data related to those services. Phase Two - scheduled to be complete in August of this year includes STELLA, CDC (Center for Disease Control), and lab. Phase Three is still to be determined. Thirty-one of thirty-five Health Department districts throughout Virginia are using VISION.

The Health Department's approach to interfacing with localities is the use of what they are calling an interface engine. This interface engine is in the analysis phase with four pilot agencies (Arlington County, Fairfax County, the City of Newport News, and the University of Virginia). The interface engine has been successfully implemented in Arlington County and analysis is underway this week with meetings at the City of Newport News. Attached to the minutes is a Powerpoint presentation made by Jeff covering this data warehousing approach. Jeff's e-mail address is jstreet@vdh.state.va.us.

Network Integration

David Sullivan reported on the overall frustration from a local perspective of being able to integrate various state agency networks with locality networks. Although there have been some successes, such as recent work done by the Virginia State Police with the VCIN system, many agencies still tend to approach localities as though they have no interface with other state agencies. Localities still have a view of a statewide Internet that includes all state agencies and localities. This vision includes using Internet type standards and security to ensure that everyone has access and that we lower our overall complexity and cost of support. David reported that, in come cases, an individual may need two workstations to meet state agency requirements for security and that individual still be able to access and use systems provided by their locality.

When the Single Pipeline Concept was first stated in the early nineteen-nineties there were many technology barriers. Today standards have replaced most of those technology barriers. Since the early nineteen-nineties, great progress has been made by DIT in the consolidation of data circuits with the CTN and further consolidation has taken place with the use of Network Virginia. While this does allow many circuits to ride one pipe, it still introduces complexity on the locality's end with multiple routers, IP addressing schemes, and security requirements.

Issues that still need to be examined include overall capacity planning for a statewide network as today agencies do their own capacity planning and purchase their own circuits oftentimes resulting in an overutilization or over commitment of bandwidth to a particular locality, also, the issue of establishing standards for localities. We recognize that with over one hundred and thirty different localities state

agencies are hard pressed to address all the varying application and networking standards in use by the various localities. Establishment of locality standards to a single standard would make connectivity easier for state agencies. In addition there is a need to establish standards for state agencies which would, in turn, make it easier for localities to interact with those agencies.

The overall concern of the meeting seemed to be around application access, privacy and security issues. It was suggested that the development of packet filtering rules for agencies and localities be a priority. There would also need to be a central authority for verifying rules and implementing rules. From the localities standpoint the major state agencies involved in local interfaces include:

1. Virginia State Police
2. Virginia Department of Health
3. Virginia Department of Social Services
4. Virginia Board of Elections
5. Virginia Supreme Court

At the next COTS meeting it was agreed that we would report on the current status of the network integration and ask for guidance in making an integrated statewide network a priority. We would suggest that we have other groups involved in order to get more participation from both agencies and localities.

The next meeting of the State and Local Application and Network Integration Workgroup will be Friday, June 11, 1999 beginning at 10:00 AM and ending at 1:00 PM. The location will be the Executive Conference Room (3rd floor) of the Richmond Plaza Building at 110 South Seventh Street in Richmond.